

Wisconsin Works Screening and Assessment Policy

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

W-2 Barrier Screening Tool

The W-2 Barrier Screening Tool (BST) is used to identify the potential presence or risk of a personal barrier to normal functioning in an employment setting. The responses to the BST questions provided by each participant will assist the FEP in determining if the participant could benefit from a formal assessment by a professional. The formal assessment results, in turn, will enable the FEP to make a more informed decision about the participant's W-2 placement, the activities s/he is assigned to and any special services or work site accommodations that s/he may need.

Agencies have the discretion to determine who in their agency will administer the BST. Some agencies may assign each FEP to screen his/her own caseload. Other agencies may choose to have one staff person or contracted provider who specializes in this function. All individuals designated to administer the BST must have FEP training (or have equivalent training as determined by the DWS Partner Training Section) and participate in the BST training course.

The BST must be completed within 30 calendar days after the initial placement of a participant into a W-2 T, CSJ, Trial Job or CMS placement. Completion of the BST does not replace the informal assessment process. The FEP must continue to use the informal assessment process to assist in making W-2 placement decisions.

Example: April applies for W-2 on January 15. The informal assessment process is completed and her FEP places her in a CSJ on January 25th. The FEP has through February 24th to complete the BST with April.

Note: Prior to completing the BST, the participant must be placed in W-2 T, CSJ, Trial Job, or CMS on CARES screen ACWI and referred to the CARES Work Programs Subsystem.

The BST is required to be completed once with each W-2 T, CSJ, Trial Job and CMS participant, with the following exceptions:

- The participant requests to have the BST readministered;
- The FEP has reason to believe that readministering the BST may help identify a barrier that is affecting the participant's ability to work or participate in work training activities.
Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Behavioral cues that may indicate the presence of a condition or barrier;
 - A low TABE score;
 - A pattern of non-participation without good cause;or
- The participant's W-2 case has been closed for a period of one year or more.

The designated screener must use the *W-2 Barrier Screening Tool Agreement* to help explain to the participant the purpose of the screening and the type of follow-up services that may result from completing it. The participant must also be made aware that:

1. If s/he is uncomfortable answering one of the questions, s/he can ask the designated screener to move on to the next question.
2. The answers that s/he provides are confidential. If s/he is referred on for a formal assessment, s/he may be asked to release the answers to the professional conducting the assessment. If s/he transfers her/his case to another W-2 agency, the answers will automatically be shared with the new W-2 agency.
3. If s/he declines to complete the BST, s/he will not be penalized in any way. S/he will not be sanctioned or found ineligible for W-2 based on her/his decision to decline.

If s/he does decline to complete the BST, the FEP will make all W-2 placement decisions and activity assignments based on the information that is available.

4. S/he may request to complete the BST again at a later date if s/he believes his/her medical, emotional, or learning needs have changed.

Participants must indicate at the bottom of the *W-2 Barrier Screening Tool Agreement* their decision to complete the screening process or decline to be screened. The participant may decline to be screened without risk of sanction or case closure. If the participant declines to complete the screening, the screener must document this information using the automated screening tool.

FEPs must exercise good judgement in applying any sanctions prior to the participant completing the BST. The FEP should consider applying good cause to missed hours if there are suspected barriers to participation.

There are three sections to the BST:

1. Domestic Abuse Screen: This section of the screening will help the FEP and participant determine if a referral for a domestic abuse assessment and services are needed. The Domestic Abuse Screen must be completed with all new participants who agree to complete the BST.

If a participant voluntarily discloses that (s)he is or has been a victim of domestic abuse or is at further risk of domestic abuse, s/he is not required to be screened. A participant must never be asked to complete the Domestic Abuse Screen while his or her partner is present.

2. Functional Screen: This section screens participants for their ability to function in a work setting, work training and daily living activities. The Functional Screen must be completed with all new participants who agree to complete the BST. Specific instructions are provided in the screening tool to help the FEP determine if a formal assessment is needed and whether a participant must complete Screen 2.
3. Screen 2: This section screens participants to determine if they are at-risk for barriers that often go unidentified, including mental health issues, learning needs, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and alcohol or other drug abuse.

Completion of Screen 2 is only required when the Functional Screen indicates it is necessary. Specific instructions are provided in Screen 2 to help determine if a referral for formal assessment is needed.

It is not necessary to administer all required screens during one meeting. The designated screener has the discretion to schedule multiple meetings to complete the required screenings. This is particularly important if the participant is uncomfortable or is having difficulty answering the questions. The designated screener must determine whether it is appropriate to administer the BST when a participant's children are present. A participant who is uncomfortable with having his or her child(ren) present should be allowed to make child care arrangements before completing the screening.

Each time that a participant is assigned to a different FEP, or transferred to a different W-2 agency, the new FEP must:

- review the most recent BST results.
- review the CARES assessment screens and any related case comments to determine if a formal assessment has been completed with the participant.

Formal Assessment

A formal assessment is the process of establishing the extent and severity of an employment barrier and, potentially, what alternative services or accommodations in job or work assignments might permit the recipient to engage in work, either immediately or after some other intervention.

The FEP must use the results of a formal assessment to make necessary adjustments to the participant's W-2 placement and develop and carryout a participant's employability plan. The services and accommodations that are recommended in the formal assessment to help a participant succeed in a work setting must be considered by the FEP and those that fit within the guidelines of the W-2 program must be incorporated into the participant's Employability Plan.

This may include:

- Obtaining needed medical treatment or counseling;
- Receiving needed services from other providers in the community;
- Ensuring participants have the necessary accommodations to successfully engage in assigned W-2 activities; and
- Working with employers to put needed accommodations into place for participants making the transition to unsubsidized employment.

Qualified Assessing Agency

Formal assessments must be completed by a qualified assessing agency or individual. A professional qualified to perform a formal assessment may include: a medical or mental health professional, social worker, psychologist, neuro-psychologist, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor or similar qualified assessing agency or individual. Characteristics required of the assessing agency or individual include:

- Demonstrates a competency or successful completion of training in the appropriate field and is certified by an appropriate accreditation organization.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the objectives of the assessment based on W-2 referral information, referral questions, the initial interview and stated purpose of the evaluation.

When is a formal assessment required?

A FEP can determine the need for a formal assessment at any point; however, a formal assessment is required when:

1. A participant is placed in a W-2 Transition position. Participants placed in W-2 T must have a formal assessment scheduled and documented in CARES within 30 calendar days of placement into W-2 T;
2. The FEP identifies or observes, through the ongoing informal assessment process, cues that necessitate further assessment or definitive diagnosis by a qualified assessing agency or individual; or
3. The Barriers Screening Tool (BST) results indicate that a formal assessment is needed. The formal assessment must be scheduled and documented in CARES within 30 calendar days after the BST is completed. *Note: A participant who is initially placed in W-2 Transitions may already have a formal assessment scheduled or completed at the time the BST is administered. In these circumstances, the BST results are still important as they may help the FEP and the assessing agency determine if other unknown conditions exist that are causing barriers to employment.*

When a participant is referred for a formal assessment based on the results of the BST, those results must be shared with the assessing agency if the participant agrees to sign a release of information.

Consider a formal assessment acceptable if completed within one year prior to the BST screening or W-2 T placement. If the prior formal assessment results have an expiration date that indicates the results are no longer valid or there is reason to believe the formal assessment information does not reflect the participant's current circumstances, then a new formal assessment must be completed. Results from a prior formal assessment may only be used if the assessment contains the *necessary elements* and is relevant to the employment barrier in question. For example, if a formal assessment completed eight months ago evaluated the need for AODA services, but the employment barrier indicated in the BST relates to learning needs, then a new formal assessment must be completed.

Note: Effective April 1, 2003, a FEP will be able to document the occurrence of a formal assessment completed within the prior year, using a new CARES code on WPCS. A DXBM explaining this CARES change will be forthcoming, prior to implementation.

What are the necessary elements of a formal assessment?

The qualified assessing agency must provide an individualized written evaluation plan so the FEP can adapt W-2 activities to accommodate the needs of the participant. The written evaluation plan must include at a minimum, the following elements:

- a. Personal conditions/diagnosis that impact ability to function in activities of daily living and the ability to perform work;
- b. General aptitude/cognitive level (*applicable for formal assessments related to learning needs and traumatic brain injury*);
- c. Areas of strength;
- d. Areas of deficit;
- e. Range of recommended accommodations /assistive technology for the participant's employability plan (i.e., both work training under W-2 and in unsubsidized employment);
- f. Summary of findings, including rationale for any disability determinations/diagnosis; prognosis; and recommendations for additional services, as appropriate.

The FEP must offer assistance to the participant when requesting the *necessary elements* from the agency or individual who performs the formal assessment. The Medical Examination & Capacity Form, DES form 2012, may be used to obtain formal assessment information (see 5.2.1.1 of W-2 Manual).

Selecting the appropriate assessing agency or individual is critical to the success of the participant. In some instances, a participant may need to be referred for multiple assessments if s/he is identified as being at-risk for two or more disabilities or conditions.

Those participants whose BST results indicate the potential for a particular disability or condition must be referred to one of the provider-types listed in the BST directions. All formal assessment information must be documented on CARES screen WPBD.

If the assessing agency fails or refuses to provide all of the *necessary elements*, the FEP must consult with a W-2 agency manager to determine if the participant should be referred to another qualified assessing agency to obtain the outstanding assessment information. If it is determined that no other options exist for gathering the assessment information, the FEP must document in case comments all actions taken to obtain the needed information. The participant cannot be sanctioned or denied eligibility when the assessing agency fails or refuses to provide the needed assessment information.

Cooperation with Formal Assessment

Like other W-2 activities included in an employability plan, failure to participate in a formal assessment without good cause may result in a sanction of benefits. Before applying a benefit sanction, the FEP must ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided to assist the participant in assessment-related activities and document in case comments what, if any, accommodations are provided.

The participant cannot be sanctioned for refusing to follow-through on a domestic abuse assessment or service referral, as doing so could endanger the safety of the family.

Domestic Abuse Services Information and Referral

If a FEP or other W-2 agency employee identifies a participant, or a participant self-identifies, as a past or present victim of domestic abuse or as being at risk of domestic abuse, the FEP or other W-2 agency employee must provide information on community-based domestic abuse services. Information must be provided on shelter and other programs for battered individuals, sexual assault provider services, medical services, sexual assault nurse examiners services, domestic abuse and sexual assault hotlines, legal and medical counseling and advocacy, mental health care, counseling and support groups.

The FEP must talk to the participant about these services and offer a resource list in writing that the participant may take with them. If a participant wishes to receive a referral to counseling or to a supportive service provider, the FEP or other W-2 agency employee must also make a referral to the appropriate local agency.

Work Place Safety for Domestic Abuse Victims

When developing or modifying the Employability Plan, the FEP must take into consideration the results of the Domestic Abuse Screen and any follow-up assessment information to ensure the participant is not at-risk of violence by a partner while the participant is engaging in assigned W-2 activities. Consideration should be given to time of day, location and on-sight supervision for each activity.

Implementation Issues

Training for BST

In addition to those individuals who are selected to administer the BST, all other W-2 agency FEPs and FEP supervisors must complete the BST training course so that they have a general understanding of the tool and can use the screening results to provide appropriate worksite accommodations.

Each W-2 agency will be required to implement the tool at a date to be determined by the Department after all FEPs and FEP supervisors within the agency have completed the BST Training.

BST Requirements for New Participants versus Ongoing Participants

During the period of BST implementation, both new and ongoing W-2 participants must complete the BST. The preset BST implementation date for each W-2 agency will be used to determine which participants are new and which are ongoing.

New Participants

New participants are those whose W-2 application date is on or after the BST implementation date. For new participants, the BST must be completed within 30 days following the date of initial placement. If the participant declines to complete the screening using the BST Consent Form, the screener must document this in the automated screening tool.

FEPs will receive alerts through the CARES system at the time of initial placement and 15 days following initial placement, notifying them that the participant must be screened. If the participant has not been screened by the 31st day, an alert will again be triggered notifying the FEP that the screening is overdue. New participants who are not screened within 30 days after initial W-2 placement will be included in a report for monitoring by the W-2 agency and the Regional Office.

Ongoing Participants

Ongoing participants are those who applied for W-2 prior to the date of BST implementation. All ongoing participants must receive information about the availability of the BST using the *W-2 Barrier Screening Tool Agreement* at their next scheduled review of W-2 eligibility following implementation. If the participant chooses to be screened, the screening must occur within 30 days after the review of eligibility. If the participant declines to complete the screening, the screener must document this information using the automated screening tool. Ongoing participants who are not screened within 30 days after their review of eligibility will be included in a report for monitoring by the W-2 agency and the Regional Office.

Non-English Speaking Participants

The Department will be working with a contractor to translate the BST into the Spanish and Hmong languages. Agencies are expected to use translator services for Spanish and Hmong speaking participants until the Department releases the translated versions. Agencies are expected to use translator services on an ongoing basis with all other non-English speaking participants.

Options for Paying for Child Care

A participant who is uncomfortable with having his or her child(ren) present should be allowed to make child care arrangements before completing the screening. Child care may be subsidized one of three ways for the period of time the parent needs in order to complete the BST. Child care may be subsidized by:

1. Allowing the children to attend the on-site day care room (when available).
2. Completing the child care eligibility application and confirming the child care case open. An authorization can be entered to a regulated provider for the time the parent needs to complete the screening tool.
3. Entering an expedited authorization when the child care and/or the W-2 case is pending. Expedited authorizations have been available to enter for up-front job search activities since November 1997 as described in BWI Operations Memo 97-122.